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View of the village of Sedanka, early 20th century.

The development of trade gave rise to the exploitation of the Itel'mens by merchants. These gave the Itel'mens goods on credit, often against their will; then, if the debt was not paid in time, they doubled or tripled the sum. Often, an Itel'men would have to pay as long as he lived for some small article, such as a knife. This type of trade did not disappear even after the formation of the Russo-American Company (1799). The company sold its wares at prices 10 times higher than their actual value. By the 1860's, the indebtedness of the Itel'mens to this company had risen to the grandiose sum of 150,000 rubles.

The Itel'men economy remained essentially subsistence. The fishing catch went solely for the satisfaction of the fishermen's needs, and none of it was sold. The only articles that had commodity value were furs. Villages were governed by elders, elected by the villagers and approved by the Russian administration. Very often the post of elder was hereditary. Survivals of clan organization were preserved among the Itel'mens until the 20th century. These included elements of collective production and distribution of food products--collective fishing by means of fishtraps, collective seal hunting, division of the carcass of a whale cast up on the shore, the custom of mutual aid, etc.

The first efforts at introducing agriculture were made after the founding of a monastery (the Uspenskaya Pustyn') on Kamchatka, in the first quarter of the 18th century. In the 1740's the first group of Russian peasants was resettled in Kamchatka. Further groups of settlers followed, but agriculture enjoyed small success. The administrative method of introducing agriculture among the Itel'mens could yield no appreciable results with the primitive agricultural techniques of that time. The products of agriculture therefore held a small place in Itel'men economy. Gardening was more successful. In the second half of the 19th century, all Itel'men villages had small gardens, producing potatoes, turnips and horse-radish. But even this gardening was negligible in scope and extremely primitive. The natives were unskilled in tending plants; they dug the soil with wooden hoes, did not know about watering, and so on.

Cattle were first brought to Kamchatka in 1733, and again, from time to time, in succeeding years. The livestock was kept grazing all year; there was little preparation of hay. Horses were also left to their own devices, and became so wild that they were difficult to catch. They were used chiefly in autumn as riding and pack animals. Wheel transport, such as the cart,

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157 578 476 The character of the Kamtſchadales is mild and hoſpitable; they are neither knaves, nor robbers; they have indeed ſo little penetration, that nothing is more eaſy than to deceive them, as we have ſeen in the advantage that is taken of their propenſity to intoxication. They live together in the utmoſt harmony, and the more ſo, it would ſeem, on account of the ſmallneſs of their number. This unanimity diſpoſes them to aſſiſt one another in their labours,

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476 bours, which is no ſmall proof of their zeal
157 to oblige, if we conſider the natural and ex-
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515 treme ſlothfulneſs of their diſpoſition. An active life would be inſupportable to them; and the greateſt happineſs, in their eſtimation, next to that of getting drunk, is to have nothing to do, and to live for ever in tranquil indolence. This is carried ſo far with theſe people, as frequently to make them neglect the means of providing the indiſpenſable neceſſaries of life; and whole families are often reduced to all the ſeverities of famine, becauſe they would not take the pains of providing in ſummer a reſerve of fiſh, without which they are unable to live. If they neglect in this manner the preſervation of their exiſtence, it is not to be ſuppoſed that they are more attentive to the article of cleanlineſs; it diſplays itſelf neither in their perſons, nor their habitations; and they may juſtly be reproached for being addicted to the contrary